

P L A N N I N G C O M M I S S I O N

ACTION MINUTES

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 4, 2003

Chair Mathewson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. at the Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

1. ROLL CALL:

Present, Commissioners: Mathewson, Torre , Parsons, Frautschi, Dickenson, Long, Parsons

Absent, Commissioners: Gibson (arrived 7:35pm)

Present Staff: Community Development Director Ewing (CDD), Principal Planner de Melo (PP), Associate Planner Swan (AP), Zoning Technician Froelich (ZT), Recording Secretary Szabó (RS) Attorney Jean Savaree (CA).

2. AGENDA AMENDMENTS:

Chair Mathewson noted that VC Gibson would be arriving to the meeting late. With this in mind, he suggested that in order to ensure that VC Gibson would be present for the review of the Atrium Project in its entirety, Chair Mathewson reversed the order of Public Hearing Item No. 5B and 5C.

3. COMMUNITY FORUM (Public Comments): None

CONSENT CALENDAR:

4A. Minutes of 5/6/03

MOTION: By Commissioner Torre, seconded by Commissioner Dickenson, to approve the Minutes of May 6, 2003.

Motion passed 6/0

Absent: Commissioner Gibson

PUBLIC HEARING

5A. PUBLIC HEARING - 1871 Robin Whipple Way

To consider a Single Family Design Review to add a 1,370 square foot addition for the ground and second floors of the existing 1,910 square foot dwelling for a new total of 3,280 square feet that is below the zoning district permitted 3,500 square feet.

(Appl. No. 2003-0028)

APN: 044-311-200; Zoned: R-1C (Single Family Residential)

CEQA Status: Categorical Exemption per Section 15301, Class 1(e)(2)(a & b)

RYS Architects (Applicant)

Michael Tufo (Owner)

ZT Froelich presented the project to the Commission. He noted that in reviewing the project, staff concluded that no public views would be affected and that the project was compliant with the R-1C building standards. He stated that staff received one phone complaint in which the caller voiced their opposition to the project because they felt it would impair their view. The caller chose to remain anonymous. ZT Froelich concluded by recommending approval of the project by the Commission.

C Long asked ZT Froelich to elaborate on the complainant's call. ZT Froelich stated that the neighbor was located behind the subject site and wanted to know if their view was protected. ZT Froelich informed them that the Design Review Findings indicated that their view was not protected.

Applicant, Bob Sauvageau with RYS Architects, reiterated that the project was compliant with the R-1C standards and that they implemented the Neighborhood Outreach Program as required. He added that they, too, had received a phone complaint from a neighbor located at 1140 Academy, which is a two-story home. He stated that the neighbor asked if they would trim the trees, and he responded that they had no interest in doing so. He added that he would like to, at this time, be given the chance to respond to any opposition to the project that might be voiced at this hearing.

Chair Mathewson corrected the applicant by pointing out that the maximum height limit was 28 feet, not 30, but since the project is 25 feet, it was within the guidelines.

Chair Mathewson opened the Public Hearing. No one came forward to speak.

MOTION: By Commissioner Torre, second by Commissioner Dickenson, to close the public hearing.

Motion passed 6/0.

C Frautschi commented that in his opinion, this was a very sound project, but he would just like to state that he feels that houses that are over 3,000 square feet, should have a 2 car garage.

MOTION: By Commissioner Frautschi, second by Commissioner Torre, approving a Single-Family Design Review at 1871 Robin Whipple Way with the conditions as attached.

Ayes: Torre, Frautschi, Dickenson, Long, Parsons, Mathewson

Noes: None

Absent: Gibson

Motion passed 6/0

C Mathewson noted that the item may be appealed to the City Council within ten days.

Denise Young of 1140 Academy Avenue approached the Recording Secretary to ask why she had not had a chance to speak. At this time, C Mathewson asked that she please speak, in order to get her comments on the record.

She addressed the Commission, stating her opposition to the project, as it would block the view from her house. She also felt that this house was too large for this neighborhood. She was also concerned that all the noise from the construction would cause her ailing husband undue stress. She further added that she never received a neighborhood outreach letter from the homeowners at 1871 Robin Whipple.

CDD Ewing informed the Chair that the Commission's options were as follows:

Commission may vote to re-open the application in which case the project would be brought back before the Commission at the next meeting.

Commission may leave decision as it stands and the decision could be appealed to the City Council within 10 days.

MOTION: By Chair Mathewson, second by Commissioner Dickenson, to reconsider Single-Family Design Review at 1871 Robin Whipple Way with the conditions as attached.

Ayes: Mathewson, Dickenson, Long

Noes: Frautschi, Torre, Parsons

Absent: Gibson

Motion denied 3/3

CDD Ewing stated that the action stands, subject to appeal.

5B. PUBLIC HEARING - 900 Ralston Avenue

To consider a Design Review to renovate the exterior facade and pedestrian arcade of the commercial buildings, replace and redesign the parking lot with new paving and landscaping, and establish a Master Sign Program for the 1.64 acre site (Walgreens/Ralston Plaza).

PP de Melo summarized the staff report, recommending approval of the project with conditions as included.

Applicant/Owner, Tom Culligan presented his project to the Commission and expressed his excitement about this new renovation.

Willetta Steventon of 400 Pullman Rd spoke to the Commission regarding her approval of the project, but asked for a clarification regarding the widening of the street, and if it would affect her property.

Staff assured her that it would not affect her property.

Margaret Cunningham of 1604 Notre Dame asked the Commission if there would be a patio area set up behind the property.

PP de Melo answered that there would be no proposed changes to the area Ms. Cunningham inquired about, at this time.

George Burgess of 2423 Read Avenue stated he had attended the neighborhood outreach meeting and said that all questions had been addressed to the attendee's satisfaction at that time.

MOTION: By Commissioner Torre, second by C Parsons, to close the public hearing.

Motion passed 7/0.

C Parsons expressed his support for this project, but added that he would like to see the landscape project come back for Commission review when it has been finalized.

C Frautschi suggested that the entrance/driveway into the lot closest to El Camino from Ralston should also be widened and/or eliminated. He added that due to its narrowness, when you want to turn into the lot, you have to wait to let other cars out first, backing up cars into the El Camino Intersection.

C Long said he was thrilled to have an experienced Management company come in and be interested in making Belmont a better place. He continued that he felt there were additional opportunities for revenue generation in that property.

MOTION: By Commissioner Torre, seconded by Commissioner Parsons, to approve the Design Review at 900 Ralston Avenue with a few changes. That the words criteria be replaced with the word principle, in the resolution. That conditions 1 and 2 under section 3 on page 6 of the conditions be removed, and with the final condition that the landscape plan be returned to the Planning Commission for review. Also, that staff work with applicant in addressing pedestrian access as part of the landscape plan.

Ayes: Torre, Parsons, Dickenson, Long, Frautschi, Gibson, Mathewson

Noes: None

Absent: None

Motion passed 7/0

Chair Mathewson noted that the item may be appealed to the City Council within ten days.

5C. PUBLIC HEARING - 877 Ralston Avenue

To consider a Negative Declaration of Environmental Significance, Conditional Use Permit, Grading Plan, Design Review, and Tree Removal Permit to construct a new 17,290 square foot mixed commercial use (retail/office) development, which includes ground floor retail space, and second/third floor offices. The proposal includes a 47-space parking lot within the southern portion of the 26,417 square foot subject site for the project.

PP de Melo presented the project to the Commission, recommending approval of the project.

C Parsons asked staff if there has been a formal agreement entered into by the owners that would agree to shared parking.

PP de Melo replied that an agreement has not yet been finalized, but that negotiations were in progress.

C Frautschi asked staff if Ralston is considered a scenic corridor, and if so, would the placement of a 3 story building partially obstruct, and from some critical vantage points, block views of the wooded hills beyond?

CDD Ewing responded, noting that the question was not whether there is an impact, but whether there is a significant impact, and since this is the densest area of Belmont, being the "Downtown" area, it was determined that this additional height and bulk was not significant.

Applicant, John Ward addressed the Commission, introducing the Landscape Architect, Bruce Chan.

Mr. Chan spoke briefly and described the drainage and landscape system to the Commission.

Architect, Frank Gonsalves briefly reviewed the history of the application as it progressed from its inception, to the present, noting the many changes that were made to the plans by those involved with the project.

C Long asked Mr. Gonsalves to point out the mansard design on the building plans. He then asked staff to elaborate on the specific rules that apply to the mansard roof.

PP de Melo noted that it was described in the staff report and that the Commissioners had a hand-out which describes the various types of roofs. He added that staff concluded that this project had a combination of hip and gabled roofs.

VC Gibson stated that he was expecting to see shear wall with the steel moment frames.

Mr. Gonsalves said that originally, when the cantilever was going to be used, moment frames would have been implemented, but because it would now be covered on three sides, the moment frames would not be used, instead only additional supports would be used.

VC Gibson questioned whether there would be adequate lateral basing, to resist seismic loads.

Mr. Gonsalves reassured the Commission that prior to construction, there would be adequate loading for the shear loads on the building.

VC Gibson echoed that he still felt it looked inadequate to him.

C Frautschi questioned the size of the loading dock area, noting that it looked as if it would be quite difficult for a large truck to maneuver a delivery in this area.

PP de Melo responded that this site would be for commercial mixed use, and although it would be a tough maneuver, staff believes it is the only feasible location for an on-site loading space.

C Long asked that Mr. Gonsalves elaborate on the construction materials to be used for this project, particularly the windows.

Mr. Gonsalves stated that the windows would be either wire glass or fire rated glass. He added that the building material would be what is called "Hardi Plank", and shingled siding.

C Long then asked Mr. Gonsalves, if he were to characterize the Atrium Element as being from a certain "school" of architecture, what "school" would he call that.

Mr. Gonsalves stated that he would not attribute it to a specific design, but it would be called a space framing type structure. He expounded by asking C Long if he was familiar with Buckminster Fullers' Geodesic Dome, as he was the one who popularized this type of structure, known as space framing.

C Long then stated that he had been to Milan, Italy, and he would describe the theme of the structure as Italianate, but he would like Mr. Gonsalves to "weigh-in" on the subject.

Mr. Gonsalves replied that he would call it a kind of eclectic, combination Victorian in keeping with the Village Center theme.

Break: 9:30 pm

Reconvened: 9:40 pm

Peter Jordan, of 877 Ralston, one of the business owners at the subject site, stated that he would find it unacceptable to offer an adjoining property owner an irrevocable easement unless he had an agreement of a mutual easement. He added that he felt that by doing so, the City was asking him to give up some of his rights as an owner.

George Burgess, of 2423 Read Avenue, urged the Commission to allow this project to go forward.

George Metropoulos, Belmont City Council Member, of 2014 Monroe stated that he hoped that when the project got underway, the Developer would consider Union Jobs and Union Wages and he would continue to encourage that throughout the process.

Alec Little of 1048 O'Neill, voiced his general appreciation for all the diligence of the Commission regarding this project.

Carol Kittermaster of 2387 Lyall Way, Bob McAdam of 3506 Hillcrest, John Christgau of 2704 Comstock, Marge Ridge of 323 Hiller, Ron Berridge of 2664 Comstock Circle, Beverly McAdam of 3506 Hillcrest, and Doris Barbagelata of 819 Holly Road, all voiced their strong support for this project.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, second by VC Gibson to close the public hearing.

Motion passed: 7/0

C Long voiced another concern regarding the building materials to be used. He noted that the DTSP required the use of historic materials and historic construction techniques. He then asked staff if they would also "weigh-in" on that subject.

CDD Ewing said that the materials were allowable and the finish and the texture of the materials mimicked natural materials and were less susceptible to warping and splitting and other things that make wood a high maintenance exterior.

VC Gibson voiced his continued concern that once the shear walls are installed, the openings in the south elevation will not work.

C Parsons stated that he thought there was an opportunity for more landscaping if the parking is rearranged. He would like to see more in ground landscaping along the Ralston side of the building, and more plants throughout the parking lot.

C Frautschi said that he still feels the building is too bulky and large for this site. He added that the Atrium, in its current presentation, still remains unharmonious with the lower proportions of the designed structure. He also felt that the front and rear entrances of the building should be treated with more detail, as well as the Eastern Façade. His final comment was that it was not the responsibility of the Commission to determine the economic feasibility of a privately financed development, but rather, the Commission's responsibility was to follow the rules and guidelines of the DTSP and to protect the character and development of the Downtown area with a cohesive approach in mind.

Chair Mathewson stated that he was still concerned about the Atrium component being higher than the 28 feet allowed for a street front on Ralston.

C Long suggested that discussion continue and he asked staff, in regards to the DTSP, what was the Commission's "wiggle" room, for not having to find that this is not a steeply pitched roof.

PP de Melo, reading from the DTSP, stated that the design guidelines of section 4.6.2 indicate that the roof shall be predominantly steeply pitched including a variety of roof types. There is not an indication of what the pitch shall be, or a further explanation of the use of the word "steeply" in that description.

VC Gibson requested that a condition of approval be added, stating that any significant changes to the design of the building as a result of structural engineering shall cause the project to return to the Commission for further review.

C Torre asked staff if the floor area on the third floor of the Atrium is being counted as floor area.

PP de Melo responded, saying that it was not included in the floor area, because it is open on one side.

MOTION: By Commissioner Torre, second by Commissioner Parsons, to move a resolution of the Planning Commission of the City of Belmont to adopt a Negative Declaration of Environmental Significance, for construction of the Atrium Commercial Development at 877 Ralston Avenue.

Ayes: Torre, Parsons, Dickenson, Long, Frautschi, Gibson, Mathewson

Noes: None

Absent: None

Motion passed 7/0

MOTION: By Commissioner Torre, second by Commissioner Parsons, move a resolution of the Planning Commission of the City of Belmont to approve a Conditional Use Permit, Grading Plan, Design Review, and Tree Removal Permit, for construction of the Atrium Commercial Development at 877 Ralston Avenue with the Conditions attached. This will include the following conditions:

Final landscape plan shall be subject to review and approval of the Planning Commission.

No tinted or reflective glass shall be permitted.

Final window treatment shall comply with the DTSP

Applicant shall provide a written report of good faith efforts regarding a mutual access agreement with the Belmont Village Center.

Any building/parking modifications to the plans due to engineering report findings on structural stability shall be subject to review by Planning Commission.

Ayes: Torre, Parsons, Dickenson, Long, Gibson,

Noes: Frautschi, Mathewson

Absent: None

Motion passed 5/2

Break: 11:05 p.m.

Reconvened: 11:10 p.m.

5D. PUBLIC HEARING - 2200 Carlmont Drive

To consider a Conditional Use Permit and Design Review to allow the existing pre-school to add a 499 square foot office area, and to remove and replace a detached 500 square foot outbuilding with a 440 square foot workshop storage structure.

(Appl. No. 2003-0026)

APN's: 045-013-020, 030, & 040; Zoned: R-3 (Multi-Family Residential)

CEQA Status: Categorically Exempt, Sections 15301, Class 1(e)(1) & 15302, Class 2(b)

Pamela Clarke (Applicant/ Owner)

AP Swan presented the project to the Commission, noting that the neighborhood outreach program was implemented, and staff is recommending approval.

Chair Mathewson asked if the applicant cared to come forward and add comments. Applicant declined.

MOTION: By Commissioner Parsons, second by Commissioner Dickenson to close the public hearing.

Motion passed: 7/0

No specific Commission discussion on the Project.

MOTION: By Commissioner Long, second by Commissioner Frautschi, to approve a Conditional Use Permit and Design Review to allow the existing pre-school to add a 499 square foot office area, and to remove and replace a detached 500 square foot outbuilding with a 440 square foot workshop storage structure.

Ayes: Long, Frautschi, Dickenson, Torre, Parsons, Gibson, Mathewson

Noes: None

Absent: None

Motion passed 7/0

Chair Mathewson noted that the item may be appealed to the City Council within ten days.

6. REPORTS, STUDIES, UPDATES AND COMMENTS

CDD Ewing reported that there would be no Council Meeting On August 11, 2003 due to Vacation schedules.

C Frautschi brought up the Safeway repair that needs to be done on the door in the back of the store.

CDD Ewing said this was a code enforcement issue and the City's Code Enforcement Office has made contact with Safeway to rectify the problem.

CDD Ewing informed the Commission that the City of Belmont had received a recommendation to be awarded a grant of \$112,000.00 under Prop 46 for Code enforcement, in which people would be able to view open permits through our CRW software. He added that the State Board would finalize this at the end of this month.

7. PLANNING COMMISSION LIAISON TO CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF TUESDAY,

June 10, 2003.

Liaison: Commissioner Frautschi

Alternate Liaison: Commissioner Dickenson

8. ADJOURNMENT:

The meeting adjourned at 11:30 p.m. to a regular meeting on June 17, 2003 at 7:00 p.m. at Twin Pines Senior and Community Center.

Craig A. Ewing, AICP

Planning Commission Secretary

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in the Community Development Department

Please call (650) 595-7417 to schedule an appointment.